

Honoring the Sabbath

Key Verse: *“Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?”*
—**Luke 6:9**

Selected Scripture:
Luke 6:1-11

OUR LESSON TAKES PLACE

at a time when the Jewish Law was still in force. In this lesson, we are given the true interpretation of the fourth commandment—“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” (Exod. 20:8) It is this understanding, given by our Lord, which the followers of Christ today are to follow, rather than the extreme, literal interpretations given to it by Jewish and even some Christian teachers.

Jesus had just entered the synagogue, and, as he taught, he saw a man with a withered right hand. He then asked those around him the question posed in our Key Verse. He did so because he perceived their evil thoughts as well as their lack of understanding. After looking around at those gathered there, he said to the man, “Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.”—**Luke 6:10**

As our Lord’s healing was done not by manual labor, but by the word of his mouth, the evil motive of his adversaries is most evident. In an earlier verse, we read, “The scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.” (vs. 7) They had been desiring to condemn him on some matter, and they took advantage of the situation to make their accusations against him.

The scribes and Pharisees appreciated only the letter of the law, rather than the deeper spiritual import of it. For this reason, they “added” specific methods and traditions of outward observances of the Law, while mostly overlooking and neglecting its real sentiment and spirit.

Just prior to this latest encounter with those who opposed him, “certain of the Pharisees said, . . . Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days?” (Luke 6:2) Our Lord then responded to them with these words, “The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.” (vs. 5) He showed to them, both by word and action, that to do the will of God is never contrary to his ultimate purpose, which is centered on having love and compassion for those in need. Thus, by healing the man in the synagogue, he was showing that he was fulfilling God’s law in the true sense of the word, and not violating its letter or its spirit in any way.—vs. 36; II John 6

A powerful demonstration was given by our Lord in the words of our Key Verse—so much so that his questions could not be answered nor challenged by the Jewish religious leaders. On another occasion, we are told that even some of the leaders commented that “Never man spake like this man.” (John 7:46) He was clearly far superior to any member of the fallen race. (Heb. 7:26) Jesus had previously told his disciples that he was fully aware of the importance of the Law and its proper observance. He said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”—Matt. 5:17

The Jews had gradually lost sight of God’s perfect law and had filled their minds with certain traditions and observances which were more or less contrary to it. By his words and actions, Jesus was assuring them, and us, that his purpose was to set aside human traditions. Rather, he sought to “establish the law” and “make it honourable,” as originally intended when it was given by God to Israel through Moses.—Isa. 42:21; Rom. 3:31, 7:12 ■